

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 10449

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HK

SUBJECT: NEW NCNA DIRECTOR VISITS ICA EXHIBIT

1. THE MORE FORTHCOMING PRC ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. IS BEGINNING TO RUB OFF ON US AS WELL. ON AUGUST 5, WANG K'UANG, THE RECENTLY-ARRIVED NEW DIRECTOR OF NCNA, VISITED THE ICA LIBRARY TO VIEW AN EXHIBIT OF PAINTINGS BY DONG KINGMAN. THE VISIT MARKED THE FIRST TIME THAT A DIRECTOR OF NCNA (THE RECOGNIZED HEAD OF THE PRC APPARATUS HERE) HAS ACCEPTED A CONSULTATE GENERAL INVITATION AS WELL AS THE FIRST VISIT BY A RANKING PRC CADRE TO AN OFFICIAL AMERICAN OFFICE. PRIOR TO THAT THE HIGHEST NCNA REPRESENTATION WE'D BEEN ABLE TO ATTRACT TO ANY OF OUR FUNCTIONS HAD BEEN AT THE SECOND OR THIRD DEPUTY DIRECTOR LEVEL.

2. THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT WANG WAS ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS. HE SEIZED AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERTAKE THIS DEPARTURE AND THE FACT THAT IT WAS DONE SO SHORTLY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL ADDS TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACT. THE INVITATION, UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF THE CONSUL GENERAL, WAS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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AN OPENING WHICH NEVER TOOK PLACE, HAVING BEEN CANCELLED BY TYPHOON AGNES. A FEW DAYS LATER WE WERE UNEXPECTEDLY NOTIFIED BY NCNA OF WANG'S INTENDED VISIT. WANG, ACCOMPANIED BY TWO AIDES AND AN INTERPRETER, WAS RECEIVED BY THE CONSUL GENERAL AND FOLLOWING A TOUR OF THE EXHIBIT A NON-SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATIONAL EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE OVER COFFEE AND PASTRIES.

WANG SPENT AN HOUR AT THE LIBRARY. APPARENTLY IN HIS LATE SIXTIES, WANG, A CANTONESE WHO SPEAKS NO ENGLISH, IMPRESSED US A RATHER SOFT-SPOKEN, APPROACHABLE INDIVIDUAL, ALTHOUGH ONE COULDN'T HELP WONDER WHETHER THE ASSIGNMENT OF SUCH AN ELDERLY, SEEMINGLY NON-DYNAMIC INDIVIDUAL TO A PRESUMABLY IMPORTANT POST REFLECTS A TRADITIONAL WEAKNESS OF CHINESE BUREAUCRACY. DURING THE EASILY CONDUCTED CONVERSATION, WANG MADE CLEAR HE LOOKED FORWARD TO SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS. WE WILL NOT RUSH THE MATTER. WITH HIS ACCEPTANCE OF OUR INVITATION, THE BALL IS IN THEIR SOCIAL COURT, AND WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

3. THOUGH WANG'S VISIT ESTABLISHED A PRECEDENT, NOT EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED. WE WERE NOT INVITED TO THE RECEPTION HELD A FEW DAYS EARLIER BY NCNA TO INTRODUCE WANG TO HONG KONG NOTABLES AND THE CONSULAR CORPS. APPARENTLY, THE PRC IS STILL MAKING A DISTINCTION WHEREBY THE ABSENCE OF DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION PRECLUDES INVITATIONS TO U.S. OFFICIALS TO PUBLICLY HELD AND DISTINCTIVELY OFFICAL EVENTS. SHOESMITH

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